

CONAN THE  
BARBARIAN

THE GREATEST SWORD-AND-SORCERY HERO OF ALL!

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# CONAN

## THE BARBARIAN

MARVEL  
COMICS  
GROUP



THE KEEPERS OF THE  
**CRYPT!**

# CONAN THE BARBARIAN!™

## THE KEEPERS OF THE CRYPT

THE MOON-GOD  
SQUINTS HIS ONE  
GOOD EYE-- AS HALF  
A DOZEN TORCHES  
MAKE MOTTLED  
ISLANDS OF LIGHT--  
BUT, PROD NOT THE  
HIGH RICH GRASS  
FOR THE LURKING  
VIPER, SOLDIERS  
OF CORINTHIA--

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BASED ON  
AN ORIGINAL  
SYNOPSIS BY  
ROBERT E.  
HOWARD,  
CREATOR  
OF CONAN

FOR, 'TIS HIGH O'ERHEAD THAT  
DEATH DOES SMILE HIS GRIM,  
TIGHT SMILE--!

LESS NOISE, YOU WINE-SOPS!

DO YOU THINK WE TRAIL A DEAF MAN, AS WELL AS A THIEF?

MYSELF, CAPTAIN BURGUN -- I DON'T SEE WHY WE'RE TRAILING ANYBODY AT ALL!

BECAUSE CORINTHIA HAS A TREATY WITH NEMEDIA, THAT COLOSSUS TO OUR NORTH, FOOL.

SO WHEN OUR GOOD NEIGHBOR CRIES FOX-- WE LOOK TO HIS HEN-HOUSE!

IT SEEMS THIS BARBARIAN ROBBED A HOUSE OF RELICS...

HAH! FOR EACH ACHING CORN, I'LL GUT THAT SAVAGE TWICE, WHEN WE CATCH HIM.

IF WE CATCH HIM.

HE'S DOUBTLESS MILES FROM THIS BORDER BY NOW.

HO, ARI-- DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

I-I'M NOT SURE, I...

MITRA! GREAT MITRA!

AAIEE

NO C



TURN  
AROUND, DOG--  
AND MAKE READY  
TO DIE!

SURPRISED,  
BARBARIAN--  
THAT ONE MAN  
ESCAPED THE  
FULL BRUNT OF  
YOUR LITTLE  
AVALANCHE?

MAYBE  
MY MEN  
WERE  
CUT-  
THROATS  
FROM EVERY  
RATHOLE IN  
CORINTHIA--

THEY  
STILL DE-  
SERVED  
A BET-  
TER  
MURDER-  
ER THAN  
A--A--

YES, BY  
MITRA-- A  
CIMMERIAN!  
I KNOW YOU,  
DOG!



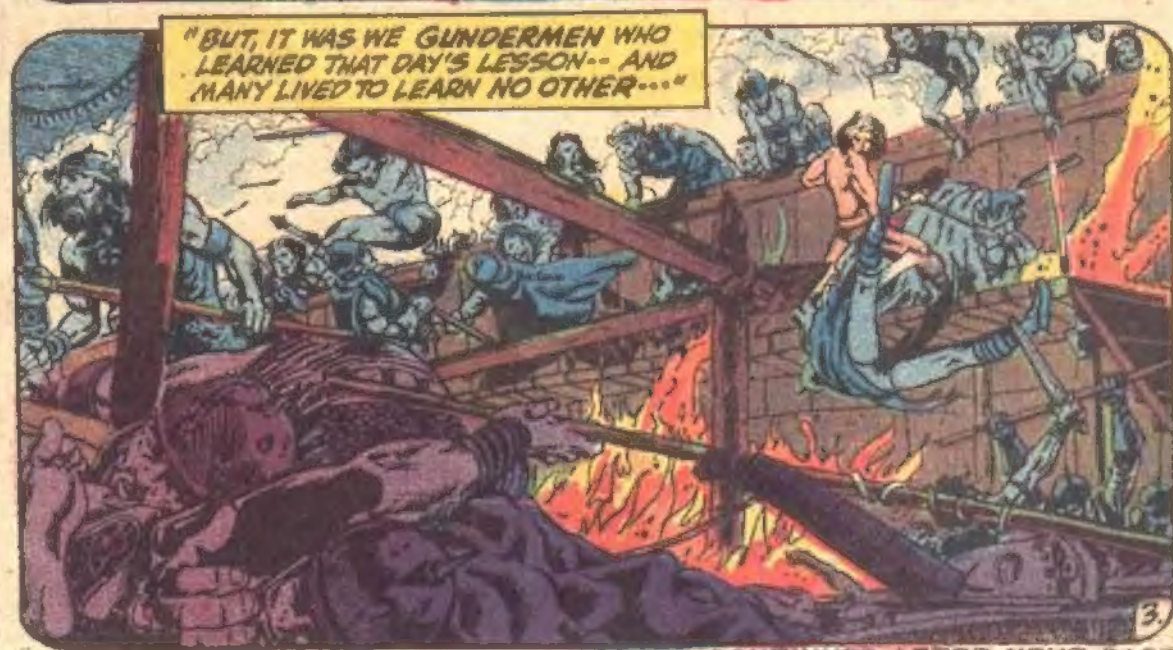
IT WAS AT  
VENARIUM  
I SAW YOU  
--JUST TWO  
WINTERS  
GONE--



"AYE, VENARIUM-- NORTHERNMOST OUT-  
POST OF MY NATIVE GUNDERLAND---  
THOUGH IT'S TRUE WE HAD PUSHED OUR  
BORDERS NORTH A BIT---

LET ME HEAR THOSE  
CROSSBOWS SING,  
LADS.

WE'LL  
SHOW THOSE  
CIMMERIAN  
SCUM WHOSE  
LANDS THESE  
ARE NOW.



"BUT, IT WAS WE GUNDERMEN WHO  
LEARNED THAT DAY'S LESSON-- AND  
MANY LIVED TO LEARN NO OTHER--"

"AND YOUNG AS YOU WERE, YOU WERE THE FIERCEST, MOST RECKLESS OF THAT BLOOD-CRAZED HORDE ---



"IN TRUTH, I HACKED MY WAY THRU MY OWN DYING MEN TO GET AT YOU -- AND WE'D HAVE CROSSED SWORDS THEN, IF I COULD HAVE REACHED YOU THRU THE CARNAGE ---



BUT VENARIUM FELL--AND I LEFT THE AQUILONIAN ARMY--

-- WINDING UP HERE, BY AND BY.

SOME JOKE ON BOTH OF US, EH, BARBARIAN?



NO ANSWER? THEN, STAND YOU READY, DOG--

--AND I'LL SLICE THE WORDS OUT OF YOU!



TALK, BLAST YOU! I'VE NO TASTE FOR DUELING WITH SHADOWS.



TALK!



TALK?

AYE, GUNDERMAN--I'LL EVEN PLAY A SONG FOR YOU---



A SHORT, SWEET SONG--ON MY BROAD-SWORD.



AND SORRY YOUR GHOST SHALL BE THAT EVER YOU HEARD IT.



THEN, NO PAUSE--NO  
BACK-CAST GLANCE  
-- AS THE YOUNG  
BARBARIAN STRIDES  
EASTWARD, TO-  
WARD THE COMING  
DAWN---



...WHICH SHEDS  
ITS BIRTHING  
GLOW UPON--A CITY.

HALLOOO!  
IS ANYONE HOME  
IN THERE?



FROM THE  
LOOK OF  
THINGS, I'D  
SAY NOT...  
BUT THERE  
MIGHT BE A  
WELL, AND  
I'M THIRSTY.

SO, I'M  
GOING  
IN...

-- BUT  
NOT...  
HUHNN--  
THIS  
WAY.



AT LEAST, NOT  
WHILE THERE'S  
A BREACH IN  
THE WALL.

STRANGE  
I DIDN'T SEE  
THIS PLACE  
ON ANY  
MAPS---

BUT MAYBE  
CORINTHIA'S  
MAP-MAKERS  
ARE THE EQUAL  
OF HER  
SOLDIERS.



WORDS FULL OF BRAVADO... YET  
EVEN SO, AN OMINOUS TINGLING  
BEGINS IN THE NAPE OF CONAN'S  
NECK, AS HE CLAMBERS UP AND  
OVER---



-- INTO A NAMELESS  
CITY WHERE TIME  
SWEEPS SANDS AND  
MEMORIES THRU THE  
ROCK-STREWN STREETS--



-- AND WHERE A STONE-  
GREY GARGOYLE SITS  
SILENT ATOP A SUN-  
CRACKED FOUNTAIN  
WAITING FOR THE WATER-  
BEARERS WHO SHALL  
NEVERMORE COME.



GUESS I'LL FIND  
NO WATER HERE,  
WILL I, LITTLE  
DEMON?



THE CIMMERIAN EXPECTS  
NO ANSWER-- YET ONE  
COMES---



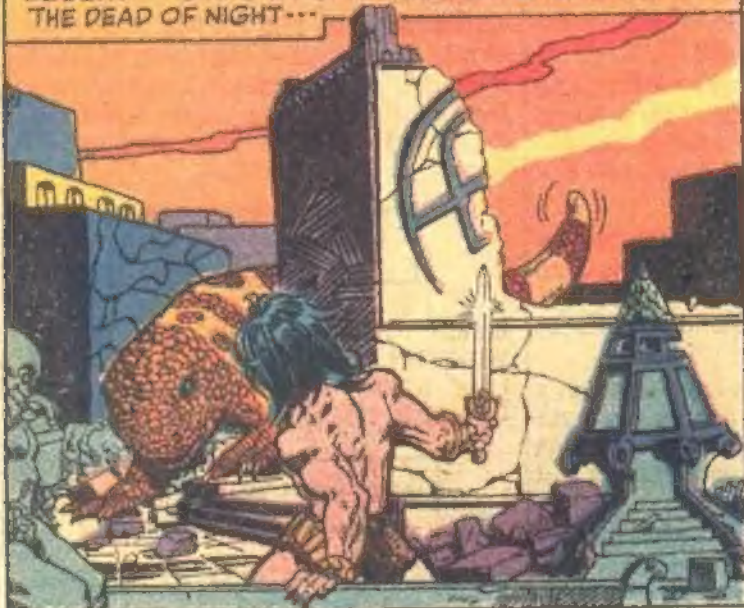
A SIBILANT  
WHISPER  
THAT TURNS  
THE HEAD  
TOWARD  
RUINED  
COLUMNS---

-- A MIND-BLASTING SIGHT  
THAT MAKES THE BLOOD  
RUN COLD.



CROM!

"**DRAGON!**" OFT HAS THE YOUTHFUL WANDERER HEARD THAT WORD SINCE HE HAS TROD MAN-MADE ROADS--- YET, IT HAS EVER SEEMED A MERE LEGEND-- SOMETHING TO FRIGHTEN CHILDREN IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT---



--NOT A THIRTY-FOOT MONSTER, WITH EACH TOOTH A SPEAR, EACH TALON A MAN-RENDING SCIMITAR.



FOR TOO LONG AN INSTANT, CONAN CONSIDERS THE CHARGING BRUTE A MIRAGE-- A PHANTOM BORN OF SUN, AND FATIGUE, AND BONE-DRY THIRST---



BUT NOW, AS AN AGE-OLD TROUGH IS CRUSHED BENEATH ELEPHANTINE CLAWS---



---- THAT INSTANT DIES!



I'M SURE AS THE DEVIL MY SWORD WON'T PIERCE YOUR SCALY HIDE, DRAGON---



BUT SOMEWHERE IN THIS PILE OF RACK AND RUBBLE---

-- MAYBE I'LL FIND SOMETHING THAT CAN.



**BUT THE SEARCH,  
SO HARRIED AND HARD---**



**-- SWIFTLY LEADS  
TO NAUGHT---**



**--- SAVE A  
DEAD END---**



**-- AND NEARLY TO---**



**-- DEATH  
ITSELF!**



**NOW RANT AND  
RAGE ALL YOU  
WANT, YOU  
SLIMY SON OF  
A SERPENT!**

**YOU'LL NEVER  
REACH ME UP  
HERE-- NOT IF  
I STAY---**



**-- UNTIL I--  
STARVE---**



**STARVE!  
THAT GIVES  
ME A  
THOUGHT,  
MONSTER.**

**YOU CHASED ME, NO  
DOUBT, BECAUSE  
YOU'RE TIRED OF  
EATING RABBITS  
AND BRUSH-RATS.**



**WELL, I DON'T  
HAVE A  
BUFFALO  
TUCKED AWAY  
IN MY BELT---**



SO HERE'S **ANOTHER** MORSEL FOR YOU TO CHEW ON!



HAN! DON'T LIKE THE TASTE OF IT, EH?



WELL, THEN... MAYBE MY BLADE--



-- WILL BE MORE TO YOUR LIKING!!



ITS SOFT WHITE UNDERBELLY Laid OPEN, THE GREAT REPTILE HEAVES ABOUT-- CONVULSIVELY--

--- BUT SOON, AS BLOOD RUNS FREE BENEATH THE RED-EYED SUN, IT GIVES A FINAL TWITCH... AND THEN IS STILL.



NOR DOES THE BLACK-MANED BARBARIAN WORRY OVER-- MUCH ABOUT THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE OF THE DEAD DRAGON---

--SO LONG AS NO OTHER SERPENTINE FORM REARS ITS SNOUT AMONGST THE CRUMBLING RUINS---



BUT RATHER, HE MAKES HIS WAY TOWARD WHAT SEEMS TO BE A GREAT TEMPLE, HEWN OUT OF A SINGLE MONSTROUS STONE IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE CITY---



FOR, WHERE THERE IS A TEMPLE, EVEN A VERY ANCIENT ONE---



---THERE MAY BE PLUNDER, AS WELL---

NOT EVEN LOCKED!

WHOEVER ABANDONED THIS CITY-- LEFT IN A HURRY.

NOT AS HURRIEDLY AS YOU SHALL TAKE LEAVE OF LIFE, BAR-BARIAN!

YOU!

I GROW TIRED OF TRYING TO KILL YOU, GUNDERMAN!

THEN YOU SHOULD'VE SLICED MY NECK-- NOT MY ARMOR.

WELL? CAN YOU GIVE ME A REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T RUN YOU THRU-- SHEATHED SWORD AND ALL?

PERHAPS.

ORNATE AS THIS PORTAL IS, THERE MAY BE JEWELS ENOUGH WITHIN FOR TWO TO CARRY.

ALL THE MORE CAUSE TO SLAY YOU-- AND MAKE TWO TRIPS!

TRUE ENOUGH.

BUT, IF THERE'S A SECOND GUARDIAN SKULKING ABOUT THE RUINS-- YOU'LL NEED A SWORD AT YOUR BACK.

OR DIDN'T YOU SEE THE DRAGON I KILLED?

I-- SAW IT. YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.

DRAW YOUR WEAPON, BUT YOU ENTER FIRST.

I ONLY WANT YOUR SWORD AT MY BACK-- NOT IN IT.

GUNDERMAN, I SWEAR I WON'T STAB YOU-- IN THE BACK.

NOW COME-- I HAVEN'T TALKED OR LISTENED SO MUCH IN A MONTH.

BLACK AS THE PITS OF HELL IN HERE-- EVEN WITH THE DOORS OPEN BACK THERE.

WHAT KIND OF NETHER MAGIC--?

BY CROM!  
LIGHT!



AND THERE'S ANOTHER DOOR, JUST AHEAD OF US.

AT LEAST I'VE DISCOVERED WHERE OUR LIGHT COMES FROM, CIMMERIAN.

I WISH WE KNEW WHAT LIES BEYOND IT.

THIS WHOLE CITY SENDS SHIVERS UP MY SPINE.



--UP THERE!



I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS PLACE BEFORE.

IN THAT EVENT, I MIGHT HAVE TO TRY STOPPING YOU.

IF THERE'S NEITHER GOLD NOR WATER WITHIN-- I'M OFF FOR ARGOS AND THE SEA.

BUT, TIME ENOUGH TO QUARREL LATER.



AYE. RIGHT NOW, THIS INNER DOOR IS--

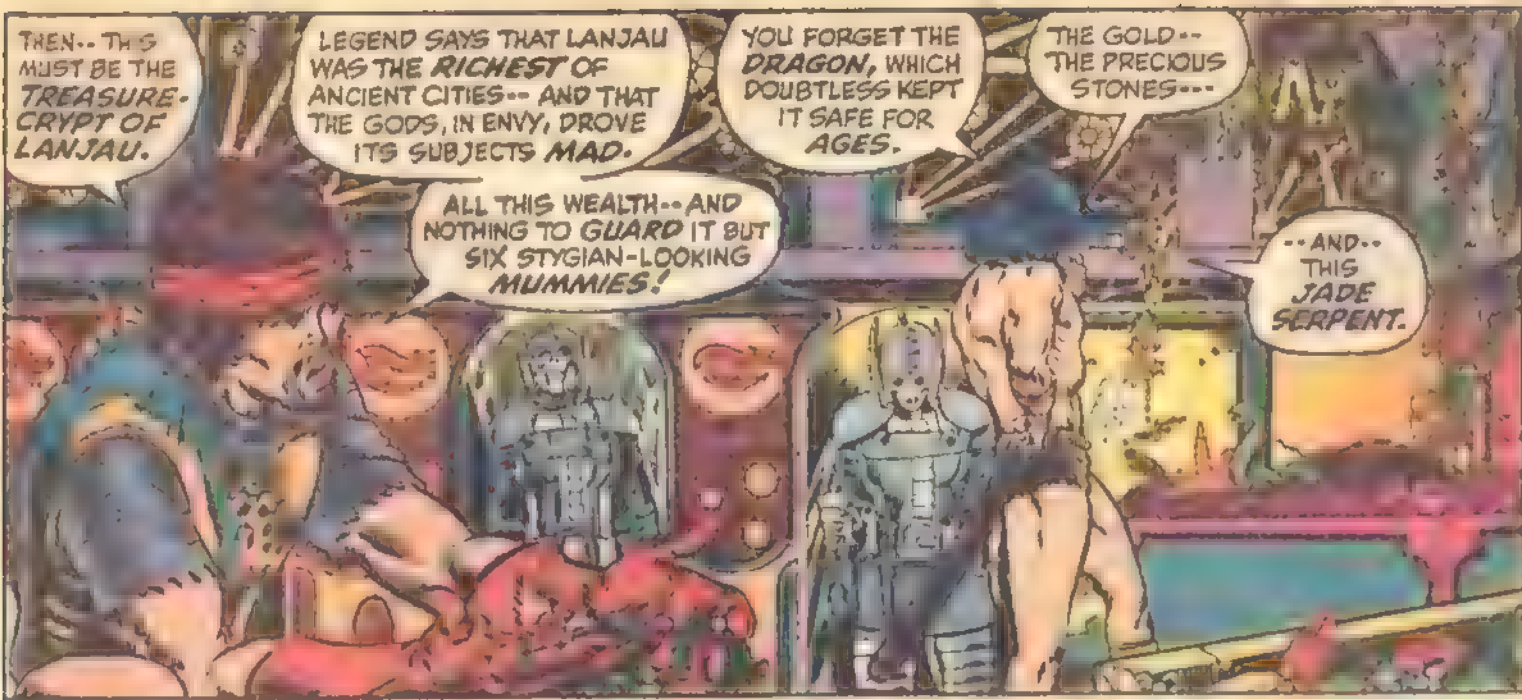


--ROTTEN!



ISHTAR AND MITRA!

GOLD-- JEWELS-- ENOUGH TO BUY EVERY THIEF IN ZAMORA!



THEN.. THIS MUST BE THE TREASURE-CRYPT OF LANJAU.

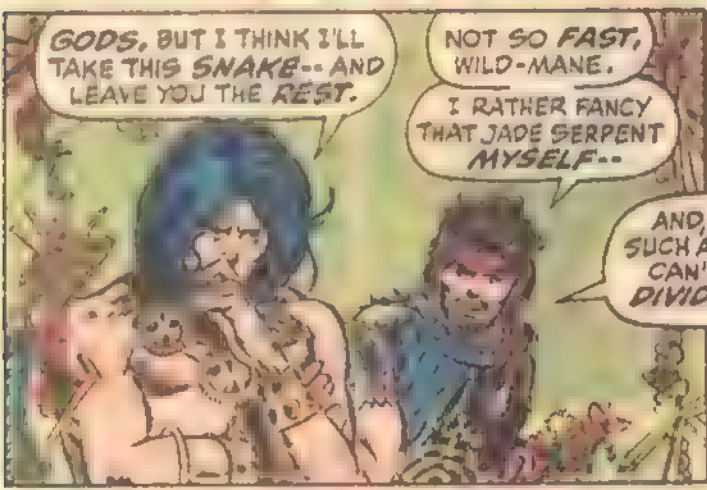
LEGEND SAYS THAT LANJAU WAS THE RICHEST OF ANCIENT CITIES-- AND THAT THE GODS, IN ENVY, DROVE ITS SUBJECTS MAD.

YOU FORGET THE DRAGON, WHICH DOUBTLESS KEPT IT SAFE FOR AGES.

THE GOLD-- THE PRECIOUS STONES---

ALL THIS WEALTH-- AND NOTHING TO GUARD IT BUT SIX STYGIAN-LOOKING MUMMIES!

--AND-- THIS JADE SERPENT.



GODS, BUT I THINK I'LL TAKE THIS SNAKE-- AND LEAVE YOU THE REST.

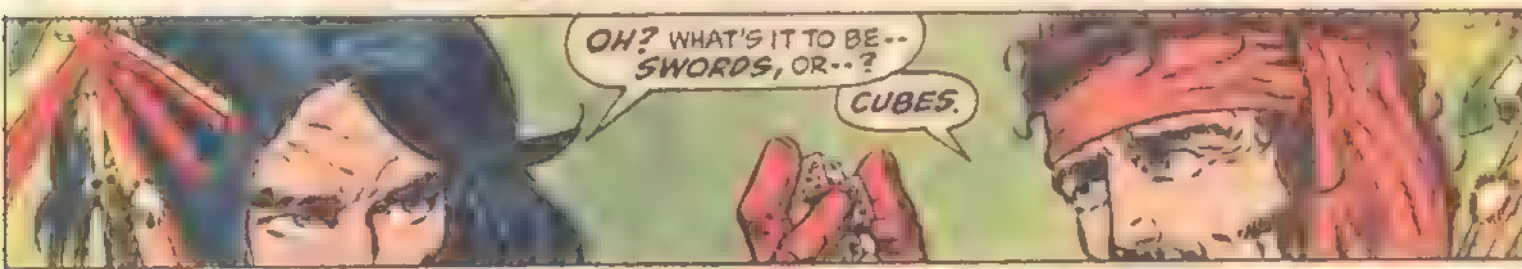
NOT SO FAST, WILD-MANE.

I RATHER FANCY THAT JADE SERPENT MYSELF--

AND, SINCE SUCH A THING CAN'T BE DIVIDED---



--I'LL TAKE YOU ON-- FOR THE WHOLE LOT!



OH? WHAT'S IT TO BE-- SWORDS, OR--?

CUBES.



HIGH THROWER TAKES THE SERPENT AND ITS PERFECTLY-MATCHED GEMS-- "LOSER" TAKES ANYTHING ELSE HE CAN CARRY.

I HAVE -- A TWENTY.



AND I-- A TWENTY-TWO. I LIKE THIS GAME YOU'VE SHOWN ME, GUNDERMAN.

I--FEAR SO.

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT, THEN?



THEN HURRY. I FEEL THERE ARE OTHER EYES THAN THIS SERPENT'S GLARING AT ME.

THESE GEMS ALONE WILL DO WELL BY ME WHEN I REACH THE RICH SEA-PORTS.

WHAT OF YOU, GUNDERMAN?

THERE IS-- A GIRL...

SHE HERSELF HAS GOLD IN PLENTY.. BUT NOW, PERHAPS SHE'LL LOOK WITH FAVOR ON A WANDERER-- A MERE SOLDIER.

-- IF THE CORINTHIANS DO NOT SLAY ME, FOR LOSING A WHOLE TROOP OF MEN.

RICH DESERTERS LIVE LONGER THAN GOLD-POOR CAPTAINS...

YES. PERHAPS THIS WEALTH WILL BUY ME SAFETY..

NAY, WRETCHED ONE! WHAT IT HAS BOUGHT YOU BOTH... IS AGONY AND DEATH!

WHO..?

CROM!

HOLY MITRA!

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SO, TRESPASSERS--  
FIRST YOU WOULD  
DISTURB THE SACRED  
SERPENT-- THEN CRY  
OUT FOR SUCCOR  
FROM YOUR GODS--



BUT THEY WILL NOT  
SAVE YOU FROM THE  
KEEPERS OF THE  
TREASURE-CRYPT OF  
LANJAU.

FOR WE WERE  
OLD, WHEN THEY  
WERE A-BORNING  
IN THE HEAVENS...

--AND WE SHALL  
SLEEP THE DEEP  
SLEEP ONCE MORE..  
WHEN THEY ARE  
DEAD AND  
FORGOTTEN!



13

13

# SUPER SPEED KARATE

**NOW, YOU CAN GIVE YOURSELF THIS FANTASTIC POWER FASTER THAN YOU EVER DREAMED POSSIBLE...with the SUPER-SPEED, SUPER-KARATE POWER METHOD. In just 2 hours you can be on your way to becoming an invincible Karate Master, at home, or it costs you nothing!**

[illegible]

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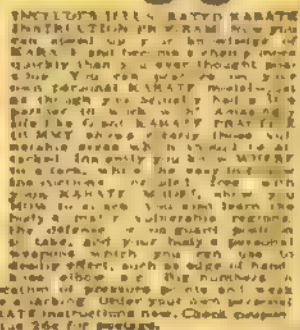
In fact, a knowledge of EXAMTE will turn you into a NEW MAN even if you ever only have to use it! For you will become self-assured and

only **99¢**

Cents ONLY PK

I would like to say a word  
of thanks for the kind con-  
sideration you have shown me  
in the past. I am very  
grateful for all the help and  
advice you have given me.  
I hope you will continue to  
help me in my studies.  
Yours truly,  
Barney

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☐ I understand that by studying KARATE I am morally bound and obligated never to practice KARATE as an aggressive (only to defend myself) and will never abuse it.

YOUNG COVAN WOULD RUN IF HE  
COULD--OR EVEN SCREAM, IF IT  
WOULD DO ANY GOOD---



BUT IT  
WOULDN'T  
--AND SO HE  
LASHES  
OUT---

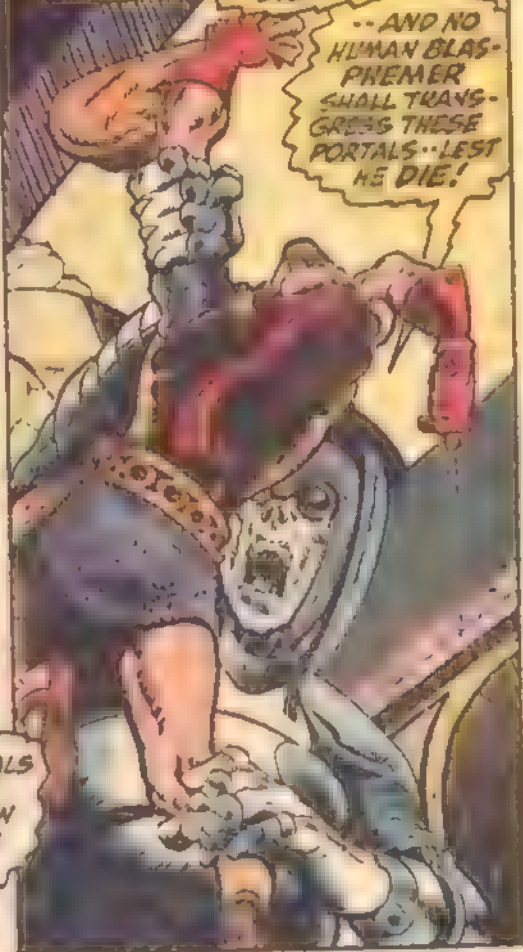
-- WITH RESULTS EQUALLY  
FRUITLESS!



OUT OF MY  
WAY, YOU--  
OR ELSE---

THEN, MORTALS  
STILL PLACE  
THEIR FAITH IN  
MAN-FORGED  
BLADES?

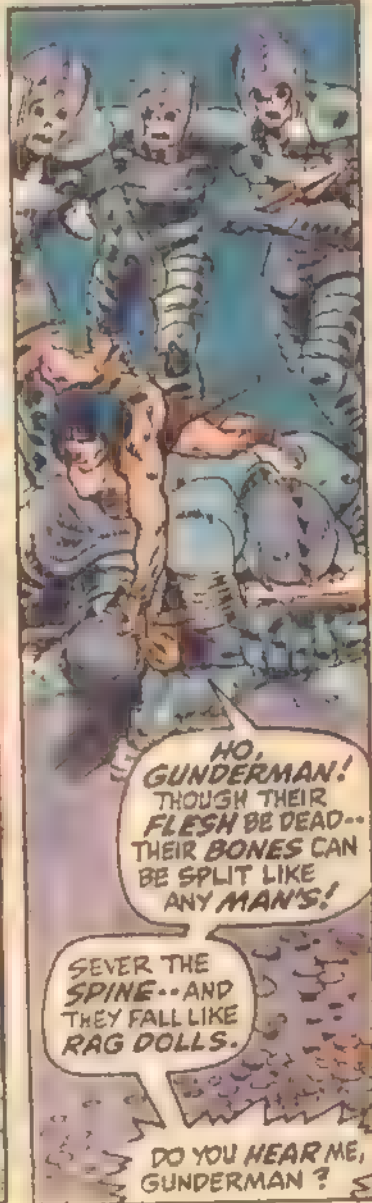
FOOL! THE VERY GODS DID  
PLACE US HERE-- TO GUARD THAT  
WHICH WAS PLEASING TO THEIR  
EYE---



-- AND NO  
HUMAN BLAS-  
PHEMER  
SHALL TRANS-  
GRESS THESE  
PORTALS-- LEST  
HE DIE!



SO-- YOU  
DO HAVE A  
SOFT SPOT,  
AFTER  
ALL!



NO,  
GUNDERMAN!  
THOUGH THEIR  
FLESH BE DEAD--  
THEIR BONES CAN  
BE SPLIT LIKE  
ANY MAN'S!

SEVER THE  
SPINE-- AND  
THEY FALL LIKE  
RAG DOLLS.

DO YOU HEAR ME,  
GUNDERMAN?



DOES THIS  
ANSWER  
YOU?

GOOD!  
THEN  
LET'S---





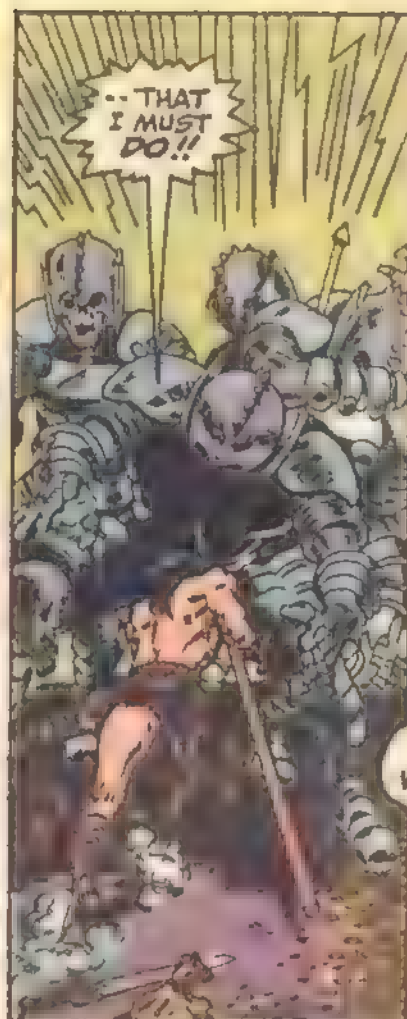
THEY'RE ALMOST ON TOP OF YOU! RUN, BARBARIAN-- IF YOU CAN!

I--CAN-- AND I WILL--!

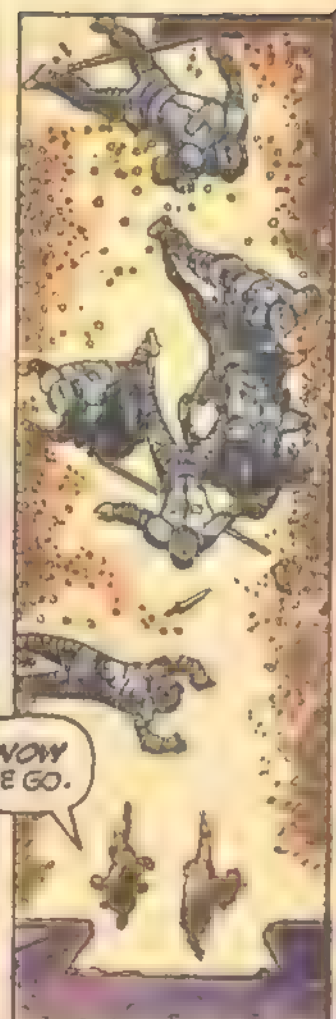


THEN DO IT-- IN THE NAME OF ALL THE GODS THAT ARE!

AYE, BUT FIRST, THERE IS SOMETHING--



-- THAT I MUST DO!!



NOW WE GO.

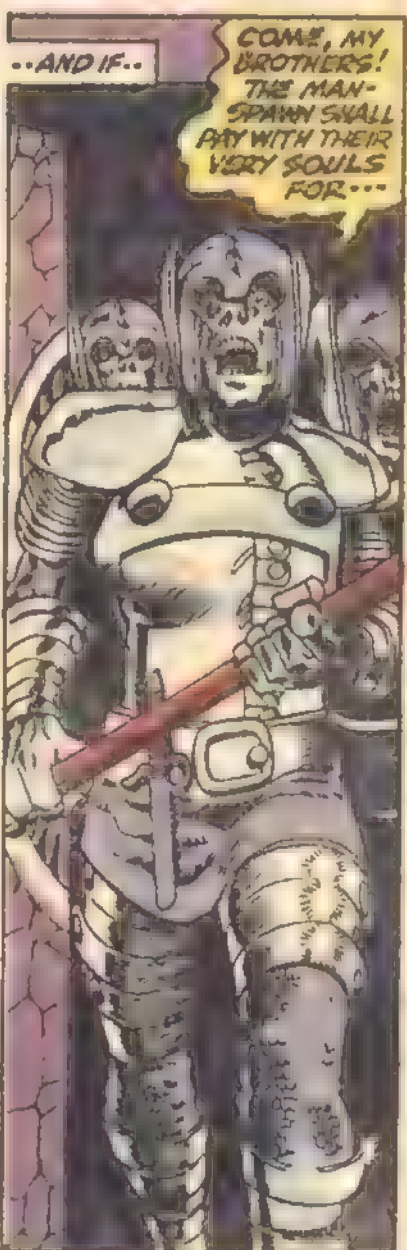


THEN, THERE IS NO MORE TIME FOR WORDS-- BUT ONLY FOR FLIGHT--



FOR, WITHOUT THE YAWNING PORTALS OF THE CRYPT LIES THE DAY'S BRIGHT FREEDOM-- AND LIFE-- IF THE TWO GRIM FUGITIVES RUN SWIFTLY ENOUGH--

--AND IF THERE BE NO MORE DRAGONS IN THE OFFING--



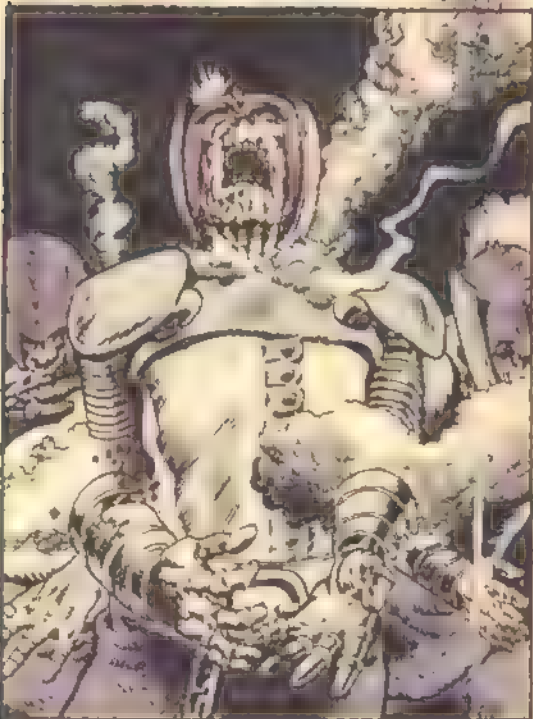
--AND IF--

COME, MY BROTHERS! THE MAN-SPAWN SHALL PAY WITH THEIR VERY SOULS FOR--



HASTEN, YOUTH!  
THEY MUST BE HARD  
ON OUR---

NO! LOOK AT THEM!  
LOOK!



THEY'RE DEAD...  
IF THEY WERE NOT DEAD  
BEFORE! NOW...

HUHHN?!

WHAT THE  
DEVIL..?!



"EARTHQUAKE!"

RUN,  
MAN! AND  
KEEP CLEAR  
OF ANY  
WALLS.

WISE WORDS--  
BUT HOW DOES ONE  
AVOID WALLS IN THE  
MIDDLE OF A  
CITY?

FLAMES  
NOW-- LEAPING  
UP ON EVERY  
SIDE!

BUT-- WHAT IS  
THERE TO BURN--  
IN THE CITY OF THE  
DAMNED?





MEN'S SOULS,  
PERHAPS. DON'T  
TALK-- FLEE!

AYE, WE'LL  
MEET BY WHAT'S  
LEFT OF THE  
GATE...

--IF MEET  
AGAIN WE  
DO!



DESTRUCTION: ONE FINAL  
ALL-CONSUMING ORGY OF  
CHAOS, AS STONE BUL-  
WARKS LEAP AND DANCE  
AND FALL---

THEN: THE  
STILLNESS.



AND FINALLY,  
AMONGST  
THE STILL-  
NESS---



...LIFE.



BUT LIFE, IT  
SEEMS ONLY  
FOR ONE...  
ONLY FOR  
CONAN...  
NOT FOR...  
FOR---

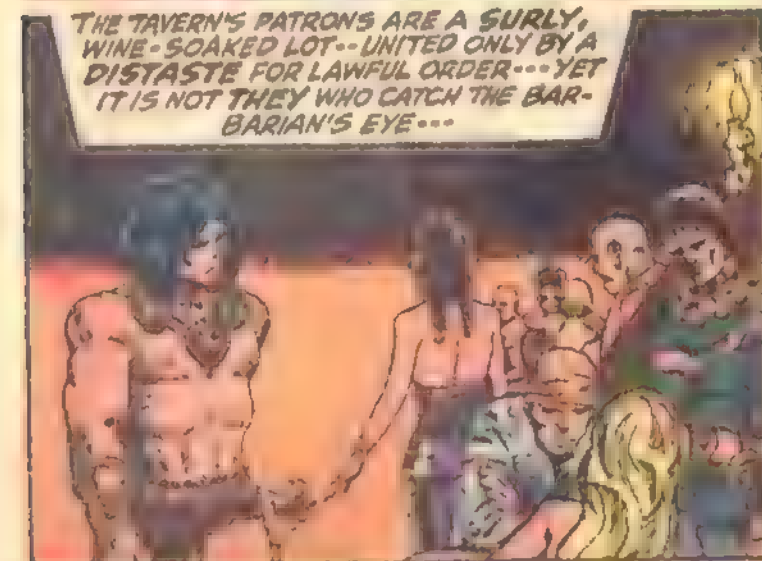
THE NAME HAS FOLLOWED  
THE MAN--INTO OBLIVION.



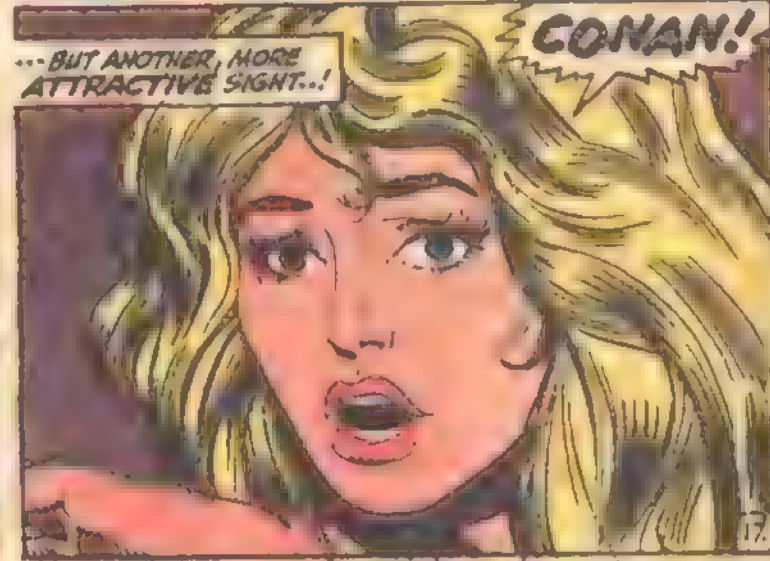
THE CIMMERIAN IS STILL TRYING TO  
REMEMBER IT, AS HE HALF-WALKS,  
HALF-STAGGERS INTO A NIGHT-  
SHROUDED VILLAGE.



SOME THINGS, HOWEVER--- NEED PRODDING.

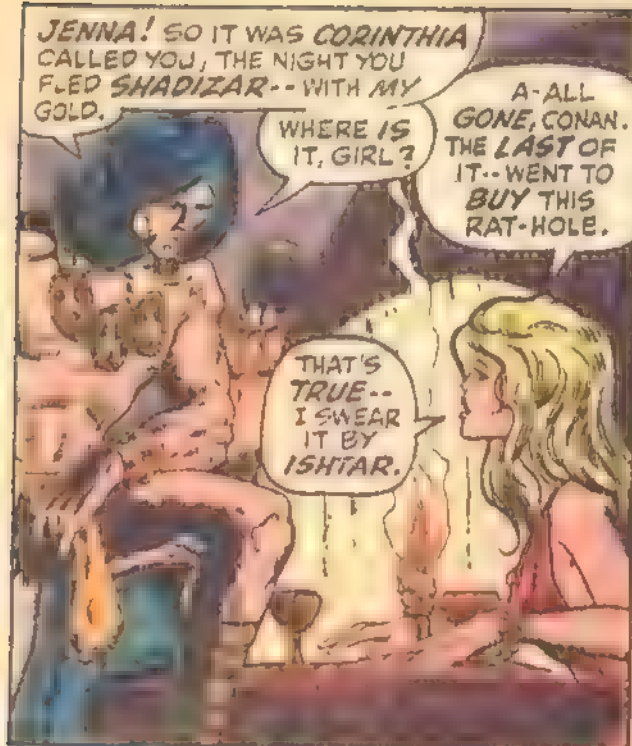


THE TAVERN'S PATRONS ARE A SURLY,  
WINE-SOAKED LOT--UNITED ONLY BY A  
DISTASTE FOR LAWFUL ORDER---YET  
IT IS NOT THEY WHO CATCH THE BAR-  
BARIAN'S EYE---



...BUT ANOTHER, MORE  
ATTRACTIVE SIGHT..!

CONAN!

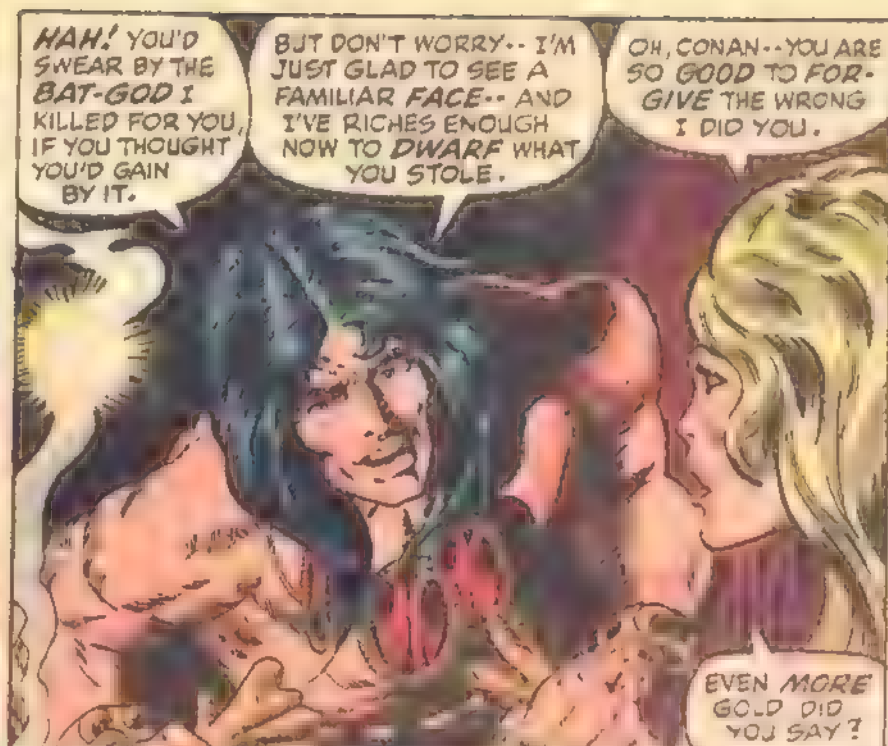


JENNA! SO IT WAS CORINTHIA CALLED YOU, THE NIGHT YOU FLED SHADIZAR-- WITH MY GOLD.

WHERE IS IT, GIRL?

A-ALL GONE, CONAN. THE LAST OF IT-- WENT TO BUY THIS RAT-HOLE.

THAT'S TRUE-- I SWEAR IT BY ISHTAR.



HAH! YOU'D SWEAR BY THE BAT-GOD I KILLED FOR YOU, IF YOU THOUGHT YOU'D GAIN BY IT.

BUT DON'T WORRY-- I'M JUST GLAD TO SEE A FAMILIAR FACE-- AND I'VE RICHES ENOUGH NOW TO DWARF WHAT YOU STOLE.

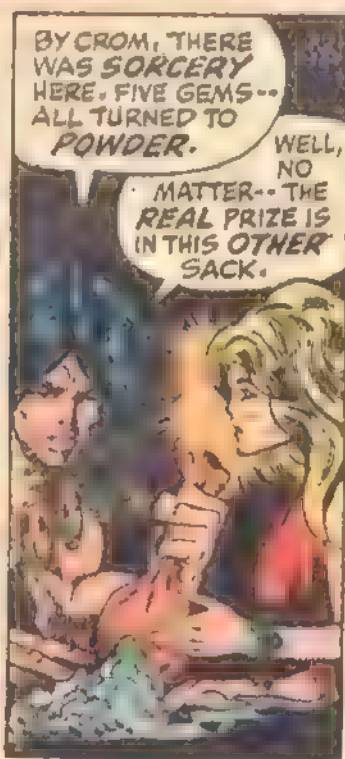
OH, CONAN-- YOU ARE SO GOOD TO FORGIVE THE WRONG I DID YOU.

EVEN MORE GOLD DID YOU SAY?



NOT GOLD, WOMAN-- BUT SOMETH'NG FAR MORE PRECIOUS. THIS BAG IS FILLED WITH--

--DUST?!



BY CROM, THERE WAS SORCERY HERE. FIVE GEMS-- ALL TURNED TO POWDER.

WELL, NO MATTER-- THE REAL PRIZE IS IN THIS OTHER SACK.

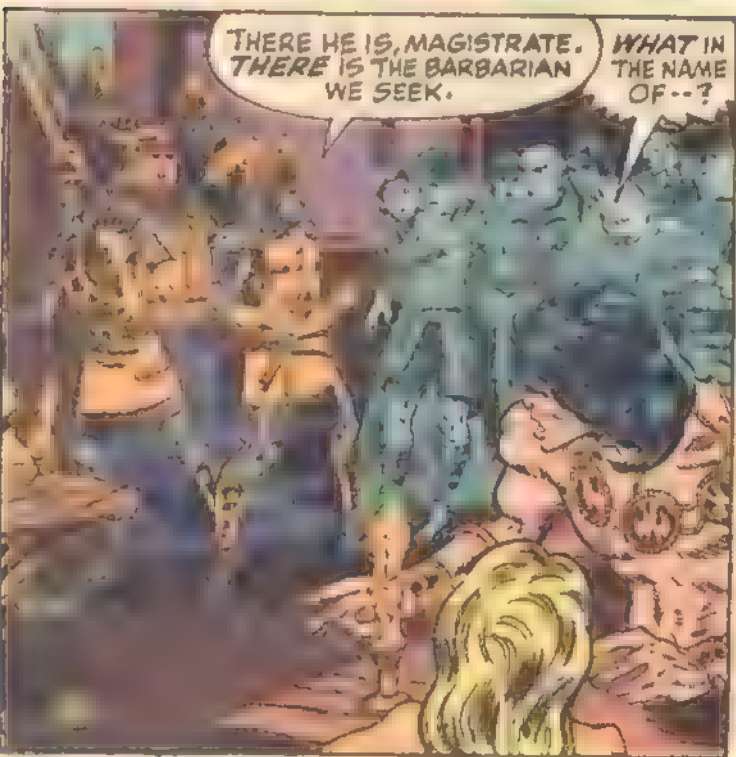


CONAN, IF YOU'VE TRULY FORGIVEN ME, THEN MAY I SEE--?



JENNA--? IT-- IT MOVED!

HOLD!



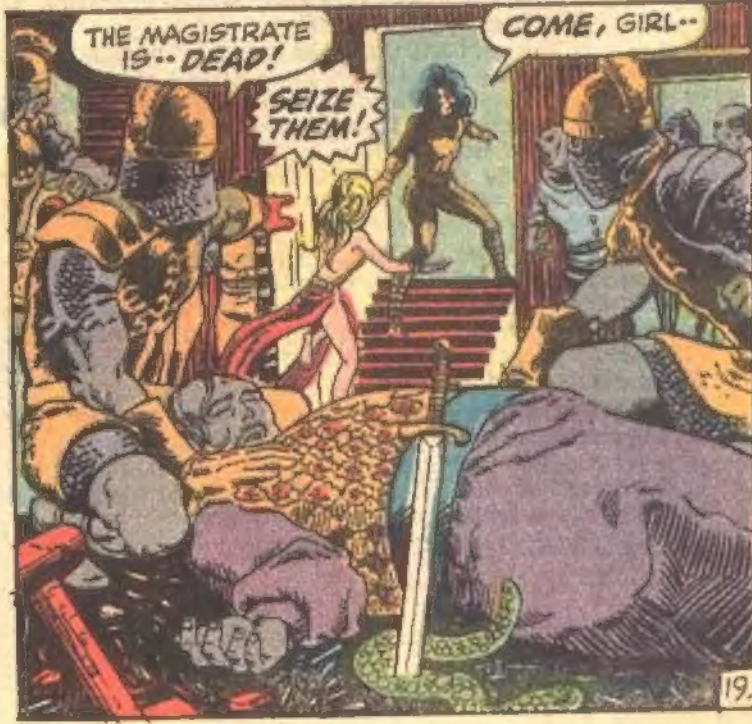
THERE HE IS, MAGISTRATE. THERE IS THE BARBARIAN WE SEEK.

WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?



YOU THERE-- SAVAGE-- FROM THE LOOK OF YOU, YOU ARE THE CIMMERIAN WE MUST EXTRADITE TO NEMEDIA.

THEN-- YOU ARE UNDER ARREST.



IT SEEMS YOU LOSE  
YOUR TAVERN--OR  
YOUR LIFE!

BOTH--IF  
THEY'RE TOO  
CLOSE ON OUR  
HEELS.

STEP  
ASIDE,  
FOOLS!

NAY, GUARDSMAN--  
NOT JUST YET!

WE'LL WEEP NO  
TEARS FOR THAT  
DEAD PIG.

AYE--  
AND IT'S ONE  
OF OUR OWN  
WHO RIDES  
THE DARKLING  
WINDS THIS  
NIGHT!



UNSHOD HOOVES THROB A DEVIL'S DRUMBEAT ON THE  
HARD DIRT ROAD---  
THE HAND UPON THE REIN IS UNTRIED, YET STRONG AND  
FIRM---  
AND WHO CAN SAY IF HE WHO SITS THE SADDLE IS NOW  
FLEEING FROM NAMELESS TERRORS THAT PURSUE---  
--OR RACING HEADLONG TOWARD A DISTANT TOMORROW--  
--A PLACE AND TIME OF PEACE FOR A WANDERER BORN--?

Finis

# THE HYBORIAN PAGE

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Dear Stan, Roy, Barry, (and anyone else who's chained up there),

By Crom!! Superb! Never hath mine eyes beheld such a change in art as in Barry Smith's. In evolving from farces on X-MEN, to fair jobs on AVENGERS, and now to these continuing masterpieces in CONAN, Barry has become, in my opinion, one of your best artists. But he has outdone himself on CONAN #4. "Tower of the Elephant" was one of the best magazines I have ever seen. Hold on to him! Methinks Mr. Smith has been looking over some of my hero Jim Steranko's old mags. He is starting to use (to my delight) Sterankish (?) type, small, balloonless panels, and detailed backgrounds.

Roy's version was, happily, not altered much from Howard's original tale (it's a good habit to know when you've got a good thing), but Roy condensed it beautifully to a mere 20 pages.

As to Conan's future, here are a few suggestions: as Conan gets older, make his face more rugged; get rid of the helmet, he looks wilder without it; and don't get into the purple-pants syndrome of the Hulk's—give Conan different clothes. CONAN is one of your best. 'Till your friendly neighborhood barbarian gets the flu, I remain Marvel's. Pax.

Steve Defty, 7117 Lindell Blvd.  
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Steve, we do indeed intend to alter Conan's clothing from time to time (in fact, he's already changed footwear once or twice without fanfare—and in issue #6 he lost, or simply abandoned, the helmet which offended you so—a decision, incidentally, which Roy and Barry made before one single letter had come in asking them to get rid of the helmet—they simply decided they didn't like it much).

However, as long as Conan is more or less a thief and a wanderer, we thought that (realistically) he would wear basically the same outfit. Later on—well, you'll see.

And a hearty vote of thanks from Roy and Barry for the kind words on script in issue #4, "The Tower of the Elephant." Our awesome adapters put in more than the usual amount of man-hours on that one—and 'twould appear that the labor of love showed thru. As these words are written, they're eagerly awaiting reaction to their second Conan adaptation, "The Lurker Within" (based on the story "The God in the Bowl") in issue #7, since they made extensive changes in that one. Reader reaction will prove—shall we say—instructive.

Only one small point of disagreement: we always kinda dug those couple of jobs Barry did on THE AVENGERS. But, that's what makes horse-racing—and comic-book publishing.

Dear Stan, Roy, Barry, Sal, Sam,

I would like to make a few short criticisms on your comic CONAN THE BARBARIAN #4.

- 1) This was the best one so far.
- 2) I liked the idea of showing a chick on the cover, but not finding her inside.
- 3) The cover was at least different from the first three. It seems to me that all Marvel Comics covers are not distinct enough. I always find myself checking the number to be sure that it is the latest issue. Maybe I am blind, yet I know of other people who have stated the same problem.
- 4) I like the way the text was used to tell the story by the drunken page, on page 5, while the pictures followed Conan. Try to use more text; it gets one more involved with the story.
- 5) Starting with page 4 you have a night scene which wasn't dark enough. More shadows could have been used. If it were not for the stars in the sky it could have passed for day. (I know I'm blind).



6) I would like to see what Barry Smith can do without the aid of an inker.

7) Please, whatever you do, do not make Conan another loud-mouth egotistical super-hero.

8) I thought that story was weird and far-out; keep it up.

9) I think that Barry Smith is doing a real good job. I wasn't too sure when I first saw what he was doing because I have read a few of the pocket books with those Frank Frazetta covers. I wanted to see Frazetta do Conan. In other words I was 'brainwashed to begin with. I really like Barry Smith's style, I dig it.

James L. Moses, 1425 18th Ave. #5  
San Francisco, Calif. 94122

To answer your points in order of their presentation:

- (1) Thank you. Roy and Barry thought the same.
- (2) We hope others felt the same. But how did you dig the spider?
- (3) We try to make our covers as varied as possible, but it's difficult to keep rearranging similar elements each month in a different way. And when we deviate too far from certain standards, we find that the books do not sell as well—which does no one any good, least of all the reader who wants to see his favorite comic continue.
- (4) Roy, too, believes in a fair amount of text in CONAN—but perhaps a bit less than you're advocating.
- (5) Point well taken; artist take note.
- (6) If you mean you'd like to see Barry ink his own work, you've but to look in the pages of SAVAGE TALES. However, up till now, Barry's been too busy to ink his own stories, for the most part. But now that he's back in the States—well, who knows? In the meantime, what do you think of the job Tom Sutton did this ish?
- (7) Conan can hardly become a loud-mouth, since he's sullen and talks less than many heroes. Although Conan varies in character in various R. E. Howard stories (and in speech patterns as well, to some extent), we've tried to establish a basic character for the Cimmerian, and to work from there.
- (8) We'll try.
- (9) You'll get no arguments from this corner when you applaud the artwork of Barry Smith. Our British-born bombshell labors over each and every page—and we think the result shows. Like the man said—that's all!

## KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

**R.F.O.** (Real Frantic One)—A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.  
**T.T.B.** (Titanic True Believer)—A divinely-inspired 'No-Prize' winner.  
**Q.N.S.** (Quite 'Nuff Sayer)—A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

**K.O.F.** (Keeper Of the Flame)—One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.  
**P.M.M.** (Permanent Marvelite Maximus)—Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.  
**F.F.F.** (Fearless Front-Facer)—An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

Dear Stan, Roy, Barry, Sal, and Sam:

I've really got to hand it to you guys for your great job on CONAN. I really like it. However, in your reply to Barry Smith's letter in CONAN #4, you said that Roy and Barry would be using all three fictional approaches to create more stories of CONAN. However, I would like to request that you please try to keep in Howard's tradition as much as possible. Nothing is as good as the original, at least in my mind. Mind, I have no reason to doubt that you would make it most close to tradition, but just a suggestion.

You also mentioned the fact that Howard wrote less than two dozen short stories in his life. Do you know that that great Carter-deCamp team also wrote some stories made from basic outlines left by Howard? I read this in an introduction to one of Lancer's books about CONAN. I think it would be a good idea to stick with the real thing as long as possible before switching, huh? Again, just a suggestion.

Also, I would like to add a contradictory note to the "other" Barry Smith's letter:

You see, those characters to which he was referring are, as far as I can remember, characters of Howard's. Of course, I refer to the "creatures" or evil beings in the story. The reason that I can't remember for sure is that I have all but two of my CONAN books lent out. They go like hotcakes. It's a good thing that I read them before I lend them out!

Well, now that I've heard what I sound like, which might not be so good, and have made my point, I guess I had better close. Keep up the good work, and I'm sure that CONAN will be as fine a magazine as have been all your others through the years.

Carl E. Campbell, Jr., R.D. 2, High Hill  
Cambridge, Ohio 43725

We hope so, Carl. We hope so.

Meanwhile, you ask if Roy and Barry are aware that Carter, deCamp, and others have also written Conan tales, sometimes from outlines prepared by Robert E. Howard. And other readers have "informed" them about this or that paragraph of which they assume our adapting artisans are ignorant. We don't mind—especially when the pointing-out is done for the benefit of the letter-writer's fellow Marvelites—but it kinda hurts to think that these same letter-writers are assuming that Roy and Barry haven't done their homework on the matter of Conan and the Hyborian Age.

Now, they'd be the first to admit they make mistakes—or even that, from time to time, they have Conan do something which Howard didn't specifically have him do. (But then, REH did precisely the same thing, since every time he wrote a Conan



story, the battling Cimmerian added a new event to his life, if not necessarily a new side to his personality.)

However, it's probable that Roy and Barry know more about that fabulous creation of Howard's than most of their readers. Roy, for instance, owns a complete set of everything ever published in hardback edition by Robert E. Howard, including hard-to-find volumes such as *Skullface and Others* and the poetry volume *Always Comes Evening*. He possesses a virtually complete set of *THE HOWARD COLLECTOR*, a sometime publication of Glenn Lord's which features material by and about Howard, much of it previously unpublished. Roy also possesses a number of the old *WEIRD TALES* magazines from the 30's which contain never-reprinted tales, and has even been able (thru the good offices of Glenn Lord, literary agent for the Howard estate) to read a number of REH stories which have never been published.

Now, Roy'd be the last person to claim that this means he's immune to making a mistake on the character, but you've got to grant him this: he's in a position to know more about the mind and style of Robert E. Howard than the average joe.

By the way, we should add here, Carl, that this is not by way of putting you down—you, or any of the other legions of letter-writers who have offered us advice and criticism on Marvel's handling of Conan. It's just to let everybody and his typewriter know that a lot of time and research goes into each issue of *CONAN THE BARBARIAN*—and that disagreements with the way Roy and Barry are handling the hero are more likely to be just plain differences of opinion that out-and-out goofs on the part of our author and artist.

At least, that's their opinion. What's yours?

